CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A process for preparing gelled food products comprising the steps of:

(a) preparing food materials and ingredients to form a food product;

(b) preparing a gelling agent to form a gelling solution;

(c) dipping the food product in the gelling solution, enrobing the food product with the gelling solution or adding the gelling solution to the food product; and

(d) cooling the food product and gelling solution, wherein a gelled food product is formed.

2. The process of claim 1, wherein the gelling agent is selected from the group of gelling compounds consisting of gelatin, pectin, guar gums, carrageenans, konjac, algin, alginates, agar, locust bean gum, acacia gum, methylcellulose gum, carboxymethylcellulose gum, gum arabic hydroxypropylmethylcellulose gum, microcrystalline cellulose gum, furcelleran gum, gellan gum, ghatti gum, karaya gum, tara gum, tragacanth gum, xanthan gum, other natural gums, native and modified starches, and combinations thereof.

3. The process of claim 1, wherein the gelling agent is added to the food product in a range of 0.5 % to 15.5% by weight.

4. The process of claim 2, wherein a gelling agent formed from starches is added to the food product in a range of about 10 to 35 % by weight.

5. The process of claim 2, wherein a gelling agent formed from starches and other gelling compounds is added to the food product in a range of 5 to 25 % by weight of starches and 0.1 to 5 % by weight of the other gelling compounds.

6. The process of claim 2, wherein the gelling agent comprises 2 % gelatin and 0.05 % carrageenan.

7. The process of claim 1, further including the step of heating the gelled food product during final preparation of the product for consumption, wherein the heating step inhibits the gelled food product from re-gelling after final preparation, and before or during consumption of the food product.

8. The process of claim 7, wherein the gelled food product is heated for more than 10 minutes.

9. The process of claim 1, further including the step of adding a packeted enzyme to the gelling solution during preparation, wherein releasing of the packeted enzyme during final preparation of the food product inhibits the gelled food product from re-gelling after final preparation, and before or during consumption of the food product.

10. The process of claim 9, wherein the packeted enzyme is selected from a group consisting of bromelain, papin and combinations thereof.

11. The process of claim 1, wherein between 0.05% to less than 2% of a gelling agent is added to the food product in order to inhibit the gelled food product from re-gelling when mixed with other food products prior to consumption.

12. The process of claim 1, wherein the gelling solution further includes ingredients selected from the group consisting of flavors, spices, fragrances, colorants, aromas, functional compounds, mycotics, heat sensitive colorants, flavor enhancement compounds, flavor masking compounds, flavor altering compounds, vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, antimicrobials, heavy metal sequestrants, and combinations thereof.

13. The process of claim 1, further including the steps of:

e) placing the food product into a container or mold prior to the cooling step;

f) removing the gelled food product from the container or

mold after the cooling step;

whereby the demolded gelled food product forms a portion-controlled food product.

14. The process of claim 13, wherein the gelled portion-controlled food product provides a control system for measured amounts of food components selected from the group consisting of carbohydrates, fats, salt, protein, fiber, calcium and combinations thereof.

15. The process of claim 1, wherein the food materials are selected from the group consisting of vegetables, potatoes, cooked meat, raw meat, cooked poultry, raw poultry, cooked fish, raw fish, pasta, rice, grain products, fruits, and sauce, marinade and blended fruit drink ingredients.

16. The process of claim 1, wherein the food products are selected from the group consisting of marinades, sauces, soups, chicken Alfredo, marinated raw beef steaks, broccoli florets in cheese sauce, potatoes O'Brien, french fried potatoes, pastas in sauces, rice dishes, risottos, breaded chicken nuggets, stuffing, fruit smoothies, salsas, desserts and appetisers.

17. The process of claim 1, wherein the food products are non-shelf stable food products requiring refrigeration or freezing after forming.

18. The process of claim 1, further including the step of heating the food product for consumption, wherein during the heating step the gelling agent will melt at a temperature range of about 90 to 130°F.

19. The process of claim 1, further including the step of heating the food product for consumption, wherein during the heating step the gelling agent will destruct at a temperature range of about 140 to 175°F.

20. A gelled food product produced by a process comprising the steps of:

(a) preparing food materials and ingredients to form a food product;

(b) preparing a gelling agent to form a gelling solution;

(c) dipping the food product in the gelling solution, enrobing the food product with the gelling solution or adding the gelling solution to the food product; and

(d) cooling the food product and gelling solution, wherein a gelled food product is formed.

21. The food product of claim 20, wherein the gelled food product is selected from a group consisting of enrobed food products, gel coated food products and liquid or semi-liquid food products containing a gelling agent.

22. The food product of claim 20, wherein the a ratio of a sauce food product to the food product is in the range of about 5% to 100% sauce.

23. A method of preparing a gelled food product, comprising the steps of:

a) heating the gelled food product to a selected temperature by means of a heating source;

b) removing the food product from the heating source and serving the food product.

24. The method of claim 23, further including the steps of:

c) adding other food products to the gelled food product after the first heating step; and

d) heating the gelled food product and the other food product by means of the heating source for a selected period of time to form a combined food product.